

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER COMMENTS ON U.S. MILITARY REDUCTIONS

1. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 9, FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN DENIED THAT THE U.S. WAS ATTEMPTING TO CIRCUMVENT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING U.S. MILITARY REDUCTIONS. HE ADDED THAT "AT MOST" 3,000 U.S. ADVISORS WOULD REMAIN IN THAILAND AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING THEM "MUST TAKE SOME TIME."

2. FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL USIS TRANSLATION OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE.

3. BEGIN TEXT

REPORTER: A NEWS REPORT STATES THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL HOLD NEGOTIATIONS ON BASES WITH THE SUPREME COMMAND, THAT IT WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

CHATCHAI: OH, THAT'S NOT TRUE. WE DIVIDE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE U.S. INTO TWO LEVELS OR STAGES. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE MINIS-

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TRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO HOLD NEGOTIATIONS ON SUBJECTS CON-

CERNING POLICY PRINCIPLES, BUT DETAILS, SUCH AS THE STATUS OF AMERICAN MILITARY ADVISERS IN THAILAND, WHAT THEY WILL DO HERE, WHERE THEY WILL BE STATIONED, AND THEIR NUMBER, ARE THE DUTY OF THE SUPREME COMMAND. POLICY PRINCIPLES NEGOTIATED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WILL BE CARRIED ON IN ACCORDANCE WITH NORMAL PROCEDURES.

ON THE OTHER HAND, NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING AMERICAN MILITARY ADVISERS WHO WILL REMAIN IN THAILAND MUST TAKE SOME TIME, BECAUSE WE REQUEST INFORMATION IN GREAT DETAILS. FOR EXAMPLE, DETAILS MUST BE GIVEN IN FULL CONCERNING WHAT EACH MILITARY OFFICER AND WHAT EACH NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER WILL DO. WE MUST NOT BE CARELESS AND OVERLOOK A SINGLE MAN, AND WE WILL ENDEAVOR TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN MILITARY ADVISERS REMAINING IN THAILAND TO THE MINIMUM. AFTER THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES HAVE PROVIDED US WITH INFORMATION IN DETAIL OF THE DUTIES TO BE PERFORMED BY EACH PERSON, AS WELL AS WHAT NECESSITY THERE IS FOR EACH MAN TO REMAIN HERE, WE WILL MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR TRAINING OUR MEN TO REPLACE THEM AND PERFORM DUTIES INSTEAD OF THOSE AMERICAN MILITARY ADVISERS.

REPORTER: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW MANY MEN WILL BE LEFT HERE.

CHATCHAI: I DON'T KNOW YET, BUT I THINK THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE MORE THAN 3,000, AT THE MOST.

REPORTER: IS THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOLDING DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES YET?

CHATCHAI: WE ARE HOLDING DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS ON PRINCIPLES WITH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. THE SUPREME COMMAND WILL BE ENTRUSTED WITH NEGOTIATIONS ON DETAILS, SUCH AS THE POSITION OF EACH MAN, HIS RANK, WHAT DUTIES HE WILL PERFORM, ETC.

REPORTER: HAVE NEGOTIATIONS ON PRINCIPLES BEEN FINISHED YET?

CHATCHAI: NEGOTIATIONS ON PRINCIPLES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED ALREADY. U.S. TROOPS MUST BE COMPLETELY WITHDRAWN BY MARCH 20, AND VARIOUS ASSETS TURNED OVER TO US, WHILE EVERY BASE MUST BE UNDER THAI COMMANDERS. MOST BASES HAVE BEEN RETURNED

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TO US ALREADY.

REPORTER: DO WE CONTROL OPERATION OF THOSE BASES ALSO?

CHATCHAI: WE CONTROL EVERYTHING THAT THAI OFFICIALS ARE ABLE TO TAKE OVER AND OPERATE. MY VIEW IS THAT THERE IS NOTHING AT ALL CAUSING ANY CONCERN. IT IS CERTAIN THAT NO AMERICAN COMBAT UNITS ARE LEFT IN THAILAND NOW; NOT A SINGLE AMERICAN

WARPLANE IS LEFT HERE.

REPORTER: AREN'T THE PLANES IT WILL TURN OVER TO US WAR-PLANES?

CHATCHAI: THERE AREN'T ANY AT ALL.

REPORTER: WHAT ABOUT THE LAOTIAN PLANES?

CHATCHAI: LAOTIAN PLANES ARE NOT OUR BUSINESS ALL. WE WILL TAKE OVER ONLY THINGS THAT BELONG TO THE UNITED STATES. ANYTHING FROM OTHER COUNTRIES IS NO BUSINESS OF OURS.

REPORTER: WHERE ARE THE PLANES IN WHICH VIETNAMESE FLED AND BROUGHT HERE?

CHATCHAI: THOSE PLANES ARE HERE, BUT SOME OF THEM ARE NO BETTER THAN SCRAP IRON. THE UNITED STATES CLAIMS THAT THOSE PLANES BELONG TO IT. THEY CAME HERE AND WE DON'T KNOW WHO THEIR OWNER IS.

REPORTER: SUPPOSE THE U.S. TURNS THEM OVER TO US?

CHATCHAI: WE WOULDN'T ACCEPT THEM. WE WILL ACCEPT ONLY THINGS OR EQUIPMENT WHICH BELONGS TO THE U.S. WE WON'T ACCEPT ANYTHING THAT BELONGS TO PERSONS OTHER THAN THE AMERICANS.

REPORTER: THE NSCT WILL ASK TO MEET YOU, IN ORDER TO HEAR YOUR VIEW ON THIS SUBJECT.

CHATCHAI: ON WHAT SUBJECT DOES IT FEEL SUSPICIONS? WHY DOES IT WANT TO MEET ME? I HAVEN'T HEARD OF IT YET.

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REPORTER: ARE OUR RELATIONS WITH LAOS STILL AT A STANDSTILL?

CHATCHAI: THEY ARE GOOD AND ORDERLY, NOT A STANDSTILL. THE BORDER HAS BEEN REOPENED AT SOME POINTS. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS EXIST BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?

REPORTER: HAS A DATE BEEN FIXED FOR YOUR MEETING WITH IENG SARY YET?

CHATCHAI: I BELIEVE THAT I WILL OBTAIN INFORMATION THIS EVENING, REGARDING THE SITE FOR THE MEETING AND THE DATE AND TIME FIXED. HOW CAN AMERICAN TROOPS REMAIN HERE. THE AMERICAN CONGRESS DOESN'T WANT AMERICAN TROOPS TO REMAIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, OR IN THAILAND. IT WANTS ALL ITS COMBAT UNITS,

ETC., TO BE PULLED OUT. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THEM TO BE WITHDRAWN:-

1. THE INDOCHINA WAR HAS BEEN ENDED;
2. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DO NOT WANT THEIR SONS TO COME AND DIE IN THAILAND; AND
3. MY PERSONAL FEELING IS THAT AMERICAN FAMILIES DO NOT WANT THEIR SONS TO MARRY GIRLS OF OTHER NATIONALITIES; THEY WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO MARRY AMERICANS, NOT TO MARRY THAIS. SOME PERSONS FEEL VERY STRONGLY REGARDING INTER-MARRIAGE WITH OTHER NATIONALITIES.

THEREFORE, I DON'T SEE WHAT REASON WHATSOEVER AMERICA COULD HAVE TO WANT TO CONTINUE STATIONING TROOPS IN THAILAND.

REPORTER: MIGHTN'T IT BE IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD ITS INTERESTS?

CHATCHAI: WHAT INTERESTS?

REPORTER: INTERESTS REGARDING.....

CHATCHAI: SINCE THE U.S. CONGRESS DOES NOT ALLOW AMERICAN TROOPS TO BE STATIONED IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, HOW COULD ANYBODY HAVE THE POWER TO KEEP AMERICAN TROOPS HERE AT ALL COST?

REPORTER: COULDN'T IT BE DONE THIS WAY? FOR THE SAME
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MEN TO BE USED, BUT CHANGING...

CHATCHAI: IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. AND WHERE WOULD THE BUDGET REQUIRED COME FROM?

REPORTER: THE BUDGET FOR EXPERTS.

CHATCHAI: THEY ARE NOT EXPERTS. THE BUDGET WOULD HAVE TO BE PROVIDED BY THE U.S., BUT ITS CONGRESS DOESN'T APPROVE IT. ISN'T THAT TRUE? THERE IS ONLY A LOT OF TALK ON THIS SUBJECT ALL THE TIME. SINCE THEIR CONGRESS REFUSES TO APPROVE THE CONTINUED STATIONING OF AMERICAN TROOPS IN THIS REGION, WHERE COULD THE U.S. GOVERNMENT OBTAIN MONEY FROM?

REPORTER:

CHATCHAI: THEY WILL REMAIN ONLY IN ORDER TO TURN OVER EQUIPMENT TO US. AS SOON AS WE ARE ABLE TO OPERATE THAT EQUIPMENT, THEY WILL GO HOME.

REPORTER: WILL THAT TAKE A LONG TIME?

CHATCHAI: ONLY A VERY SHORT TIME, BECAUSE THE THAI PEOPLE POSSESS EXCELLENT KNOWLEDGE AND APTITUDE TO BE CAPABLE OF REPLACING AMERICANS.

REPORTER: AFTER SO-CALLED EXPERTS COME HERE LIKE THIS, WHAT PRIVILEGE DO THEY HAVE TO BRING PX GOODS WHICH ARE EXEMPTED FROM TAXATION INTO OUR COUNTRY, AND WILL WE HAVE TO PROVIDE MONTHLY SALARIES, ETC., ETC., FOR THEM?

CHATCHAI: WE MUST AMEND SOME AGREEMENTS WHICH MAKE US SUFFER DISADVANTAGES. THEY MUST AND WILL BE AMENDED, ESPECIALLY IN REGARD TO STATUS, ETC.

REPORTER: WHAT WILL WE DO?

CHATCHAI: ACTION IS BEING TAKEN NOW, BUT I CANNOT DISCLOSE ANY DETAILS YET.

REPORTER: NOTHING WILL HAVE TO BE PROVIDED THEM, ESPECIALLY UNCLASSIFIED

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FOR EXPERTS?

CHATCHAI: NOTHING MORE IN THE FUTURE.

REPORTER: WILL THAT BE AS FROM MARCH 20?

CHATCHAI: SOME AGREEMENTS ARE BEING AMENDED.
END TEXT
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